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5 August 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

SUBJECT : Warning of Soviet Intention to Attack

1. As a by-product to a meeting of the Strategic Warning Working Group which I attended last Wednesday (30 July), I agreed to examine NIE 11-10-66 of 18 August 1966 (Warning of Soviet Intention to Attack) in the light of capabilities that have developed since then on both sides. The results are interesting and not very reassuring.

2. In NIE 11-10-66 we followed the CONCLUSIONS with a NOTE that reads in part as follows: ". . . some of the indicators which were considered most pertinent a few years ago . . . may no longer be so relevant to a strategic attack. . . . the Intelligence Community is aware of the need for special techniques devoted to collecting, evaluating, and correlating information about Soviet activities and behavior. . . . it is actively seeking ways to develop and exploit new technology for warning purposes. Its efforts include development of new technical collection systems . . . and (constant attention) to making the warning system as responsive as possible to present and future needs."

3. The bald truth of the matter is that little or nothing has been done or is being done to fulfill the promise implicit in the above extract.

4. Meanwhile in July of 1967 the Soviets tested the combat readiness of their strategic strike forces in an exercise of unprecedentedly broad scope and realism. It began on 1 July and culminated on 20 July with the practically simultaneous launch of five ICBMs from different locations. The exercise was centrally controlled from Moscow and included a massive commitment of heavy bombers as well as the stationing of missile equipped submarines in the western Atlantic together with significant expansion of submarine activity in the Mediterranean and the Pacific.

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5. The July exercise revealed little activity useful as clear indicators of hostile intent. On 19 July, almost three weeks after the start of the exercise and 1 day before its culmination in a simulated massive strategic attack, the Watch Report assessed this activity as an extended Soviet wide multi-force communications exercise. The same report stated that "Soviet and Eastern European activity remains normal" when in fact, as subsequent study showed, it was not. The Watch Report had little cause to do otherwise because (a) the political climate did not suggest any cause for the Soviets to engage in hostile action against the West and, (b) the detectable indicators were both ambiguous and characteristic of normal exercise activity.

6. What does this tell us? I think it should tell us that we lack means of detecting preparations for strategic attack. It should also tell us that the judgment in Conclusion C of NIE 11-10-66 to the effect that our chances would be better than even of obtaining strategic warning of maximum weight all out attack may be a serious misjudgment. In this regard I differ with the DIA study of August 1967 which concluded, among other things, that "Nothing was noted during or after the exercise to alter any of the Conclusions of NIE 11-10-66."

7. What to do? First, I think NIE 11-10-66 should be brought up to date with particular attention given to the lessons learned from the Soviet Joint Forces Exercise of July 1967. Second, I think DDS&T should undertake a study of on-going sophisticated collection systems such as [redacted] to see what needs to be done and what it would cost to [redacted] for use in times of crisis to supply the hard intelligence needed to reduce the ambiguities in our present indicators to manageable intelligence factors. Third, I think [redacted] Strategic Warning Working Group should take the results of the above two steps together with whatever ideas they have themselves and use them as a basis for formulating positive recommendations to USIB for a concrete program to implement the effort implicit in USIB's NOTE to NIE 11-10-66 quoted in part in paragraph 2 above.

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